

Deer Population Rise Results In Road Mishaps

By JANE LANE

An increase in the number of deer residing within the town borders has proven hazardous to their health. Police report that in one week alone, 3 deer have been struck and killed by passing motorists.

A 5-point buck was hit by a motorist on Rte. 3 just before midnight on Nov. 8. At about dusk the following night, a larger, 8-point buck was struck by a car on West Street. On Monday night, according to Animal Control Officer Haley-Dee Parlin, a deer was killed in the neighborhood of 90 Tremont St.

"There's no doubt about it," Parlin said. "There are an awful lot more deer in Duxbury now."

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To compound the problem, it is also breeding season and the busy wildlife aren't necessarily paying attention to on-coming traffic.

Conservation Agent Joe Grady agreed with Parlin's assessment. "For a long time," he said, "the deer population was confined to the west side of the highway. In the last two years the permanent deer population has migrated to the east side of Rte.3."

On his travels through town, Grady frequently sees deer grazing in a number of neighborhoods. He even spied a small deer along Standish Shore.

Duxbury has never been known as a nature preserve, but the deer, red fox and wild turkey are getting quite accustomed to these surroundings, according to Grady. "People have been spotting them all over town — even during the day," he said.

On the downside, he noted, more deer in the neighborhood means more deer ticks for their human neighbors to avoid.

John McDonald, deer project leader for the state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, figures the South Shore's deer population is expanding annually by 10-20 percent. According to his estimates, there are probably 15-20 deer per square mile in Duxbury and beyond.

The population boom not only affects the deer population, Parlin said. Driving into a 200-pound deer can do extensive damage to the motor vehicle and quite possibly, to the passengers inside.

"This is an on-going problem and if there is one thing I would say to people, it's to invest in a \$6 deer whistle for their vehicle," Parlin advised. The animal control officer purchased such an item after she experienced a close call with a deer and her van.

Once a deer has been struck by a vehicle, it is the responsibility of the driver to either pick up the carcass or notify the police. Parlin explained that as long as the driver is licensed in Massachusetts, it is perfectly legal to claim the carcass and partake of the meat. If the driver declines that option, he or she must call the police. They in turn will run down a list of licensed hunters in town and ask them if they would like to dispose of the deceased animal. "It's hard for some people to understand," Parlin said. "But if the police aren't notified, the deer meat will go to waste. A hunter will take the carcass and use the meat — whether for himself or to give to charity."